

VZCZCXYZ0005
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #2623/01 3530914
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 190914Z DEC 07
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7624
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7556
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 8829

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 002623

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage December 19 on the controversy over the "one-step" and "two-step" voting formats for the 2008 legislative elections; on the arrest of a former Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau operative Tuesday who has allegedly threatened President Chen Shui-bian and several DPP and KMT politicians; on Japan's successful test of SM3 missile defense system Tuesday; and on the presidential elections in South Korea today. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran an exclusive news story on page two with a banner headline saying "On the Topic of Dirty Tricks, U.S. Official Says It is [Vincent] Siew, Not [Raymond] Burghardt Who Has Brought It up." The English-language "Taipei Times," the sister paper of the "Liberty Times," also ran the same full story in English on its front page.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" op-ed criticized AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt's comment on Taiwan's UN referendum and urged KMT vice presidential candidate Vincent Siew to state clearly what he said during his meeting with Burghardt on December 8. A "Taipei Times" op-ed also urged Washington to "do the right thing" and support Taiwan's membership in the international organizations. End summary.

A) "Please State It Plainly and Clearly"

Chang Teh-chien, general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (12/19):

"... AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt's visit to Taiwan was official by nature; he came to Taiwan prior to the presidential election, so the timing was highly sensitive. Visiting Taiwan in his capacity as a diplomatic envoy and coming from the United States of America, which honors democracy and freedom as its founding principles, Burghardt was supposed to speak up for Taiwan in a respectful and supportive manner with regard to the democratic and rational means the Taiwan people plan to adopt to voice their will, and to make Taiwan a world model of 'founding its nation by peaceful and democratic means.' Unexpectedly, Burghardt, as if in an attempt to interfere with Taiwan's domestic affairs, cited a farfetched reason such as 'it [i.e. the UN referendum] may possibly affect cross-strait peace' and told this to a vice presidential candidate. The move [by Burghardt] was highly inappropriate in terms of his status as a diplomatic envoy. Also, Burghardt seems to have forgotten that had people like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin accepted the principle of 'sacrificing justice for the sake of peace' more than two hundred years ago, would the United States and the UN have been able to claim themselves to be the 'defenders of human rights' nowadays? The Taiwan people like to become friends with people from other countries, but they definitely will not accept hypocrites who interfere and suppress them in the excuse of fake friendship. ..."

B) "The US Needs to Do the Right Thing"

Chen Wen-yen, executive director of the Washington-based Formosan Association for Public Affairs, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (12/19):

"... On Dec. 6, Deputy Assistant US Secretary of State Thomas Christensen reiterated his opposition to the referendum, while a few days later, American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Chairman Ray Burghardt made similar statements during a visit to Taipei. These statements are undermining democracy in Taiwan and are playing into China's hands. As an organization of US citizens of Taiwanese descent we find this unacceptable. ... The statements by Christensen and Burghardt are also antithetical to keeping a level playing field in Taiwan.

"By singling out the Democratic Progressive Party's referendum and not saying anything about a Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) referendum -- which also supports joining the UN -- Christensen and Burghardt are taking sides in an internal Taiwanese debate and are influencing the election campaign. No doubt their statements will be played up by the pan-blue press. In opposing the referendum, the US officials are regrettably doing the bidding of the authoritarian leaders of China. Beijing long ago learned that the shortest way to Taipei is through Washington and is now manipulating the US into trying to 'control' Taiwan. In spite of US denials, it is letting itself be used to 'co-manage' Taiwan. ...

"Christensen and Burghardt also made statements to the effect that they want to stick to the faulty and outdated 'one China' policy. We would like to quote one of Burghardt's own statements: 'One of the wonderful things about democracy is that when new leaders come in, the new leaders present a new opportunity.' We certainly hope that, when a new leader comes into power in Washington, he or she will see fit to ditch the anachronistic 'one China' policy and replace it with a pragmatic policy based on the reality that Taiwan

is a free and democratic nation in its own right. In the meantime, we of course hope that the administration of US President George W. Bush will be sensible and rational on the issue of the DPP's referendum, and not overreact. For the time being, it should remain quiet on the issue and let democracy in Taiwan take its course. ..."

YOUNG